

Today there are more than 3,800 working offshore platforms in the Gulf of Mexico, which are subject to rigorous environmental standards. These platforms result in 55,000 jobs, with over 35,000 of them located offshore. The platforms working in federal waters also have an excellent environmental record. According to the United States Coast Guard, for the 1980–1999 period 7.4 billion barrels of oil was produced in federal offshore waters with less than 0.001 percent spilled. That is a 99.999 percent record for clean operations.

According to the Minerals Management Service about 100 times more oil seeps naturally from the seabed into U.S. marine waters than from offshore oil and gas activities.

The Nation's record for safe and clean offshore natural gas and oil operations is excellent. And to maintain and improve upon this excellent record, Minerals Management Service continually seeks operational improvements that will reduce the risks to offshore personnel and to the environment. The Office of Minerals Management constantly re-evaluates its procedures and regulations to stay abreast of technological advances that will ensure safe and clean operations, as well as to increase awareness of their importance.

It is reported that the amount of oil naturally released from cracks on the floor of the ocean have caused more oil to be in sea water than work done by oil rigs.

Most rigs under current Interior regulation must have an emergency shutdown process in the event of a major accident which immediately seals the pipeline. Other safety features include training requirements for personnel, design standards and redundant safety systems. Last year the Office of Minerals Management conducted 16,000 inspections of offshore rigs in federal waters.

In addition to these precautions each platform always has a team of safety and environmental specialists on board to monitor all drilling activity.

These oil and gas rigs have become artificial reefs for crustaceans, sea anemones, and small aquatic fish. These conditions have created habitat for larger fish, making rigs a favored location to fish by local people.

I will be offering an amendment later today with Congressman NICK LAMPSON to create a reporting process to access the operation of oil and gas wells off the coast of Texas and Louisiana.

We can all agree that the United States does need to develop a long-term national energy policy. Our nation's energy priorities should remain constant regardless of the changing dynamics of energy supply. For this reason, I hope that the process of completing work on the bill will allow for open debate and honest compromise.

SECURING AMERICA'S FUTURE ENERGY ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2001

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under

consideration the bill, (H.R. 4) to enhance energy conservation, research and development and to provide for security and diversity in the energy supply for the American people, and for other purposes.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my support for H.R. 4—The Securing America's Future Energy Act of 2001. This bill will at long last define our national energy policy so that the United States will have an ample, affordable and increasingly efficient energy supply for the future.

It is time that the American people declare independence from foreign sources of energy. We need to develop our own resources and our own technology so that the economy and security of the United States will not be adversely affected by decisions of foreign energy suppliers in the future.

Mr. Chairman, on March 20, 2000, in the 106th Congress, I introduced H.R. 4035, The National Resource Governance Act of 2000 (the NRG Bill). The goal of this bill was to establish a commission that would investigate U.S. dependence on foreign energy sources, evaluate proposals that would make the United States energy self-sufficient, explore alternative energy sources, investigate areas currently not being used for oil exploration and expand drilling in areas such as the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve and offshore. This commission would then submit its findings and recommendations to Congress and the President so that steps could be taken to design and implement a national energy policy.

I introduced the NRG Bill because I believed that our lack of a comprehensive national energy policy would lead to energy shortages and a continued dependence on OPEC. My concerns continued and on November 11, 2000 and again on October 4, 2000, I wrote then-Energy Secretary Bill Richardson to share with him some of my concerns and the concerns of my constituents. Mr. Speaker, I ask that the text of this letter be entered into the RECORD.

NOVEMBER 1, 2000.

Hon. BILL RICHARDSON,
Secretary of Energy,
Forrestal Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: On October 4th, I sent a letter to you asking for your response to reports run in The Wall Street Journal and other media suggesting that crude oil released by the Administration from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) may in fact be diverted to Europe. Assuming that the SPR oil would not be diverted to Europe, I further asked that you reconcile the apparent disparities between the Administration's claim that tapping the SPR would forestall a winter home heating oil crises in the Northeast United States, and independent reports that the SPR oil would not even reach the intended markets until early next year.

I am extremely disappointed that you have not yet responded to these two basic, yet important questions. In my October 4th letter I asked that you provide me with "an immediate assessment" of the aforementioned media reports. I specifically requested that you provide me with a report "early next week" so that I might convey the information to my constituents who are preparing themselves for the onset of winter weather.

Since my last letter to you, officials from your Department have testified to Congress about the President's decision to tap the SPR. I understand that acting Assistant Sec-

retary of Energy Robert S. Kripowicz acknowledged, in one of those hearings, that the release of 30 million barrels of crude oil from the SPR may yield only an additional 250,000 barrels of home-heating oil for the Northeast, including my state of Pennsylvania, which face possible fuel shortages this winter. If Mr. Kripowicz can provide answers to Congress regarding the Administration's recent actions, I fail to understand why an answer to my letter has not been forthcoming.

Mr. Secretary, Pennsylvanians are afraid that the United States has no energy policy. We wonder how long we will continue to be dependent on foreign sources of energy. Unfortunately, your failure to answer basic questions about your Department's actions only serves to confirm those fears. Please provide my office with a response to the questions raised in my letter of October 4th, by November 8th.

Very truly yours,

GEORGE W. GEKAS,
Member of Congress.

Mr. Chairman, my letters went unanswered as did the concerns of so many Americans worried about energy prices, supply, the environment and national security. Unfortunately, my concerns became a reality. This past winter we saw what the lack of a comprehensive national energy policy meant to the people of California as they experienced unannounced rolling blackouts. We also saw the implications of high gasoline and energy prices on our economy. H.R. 4 will define a national energy policy that will avert such situations in the future.

Today, I not only rise to support H.R. 4, the Securing America's Future Energy Act of 2001, but I rise to commend President Bush, Vice President Cheney and the rest of the members of the National Energy Policy Development Group for their leadership in proposing a much needed national energy policy. The development and implementation of this bold and innovative policy will certainly insure that the United States will be less dependent on foreign sources of energy, be more efficient and thus more environmentally sensitive, and will also provide every American with access to ample and affordable energy.

SECURING AMERICA'S FUTURE ENERGY ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2001

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill, (H.R. 4) to enhance energy conservation, research and development and to provide for security and diversity in the energy supply for the American people, and for other purposes.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 4, Securing America's Future Energy Act.

First, let me commend President Bush for his leadership and the committees in the House who have worked on this most important national priority.

Mr. Chairman, gas prices are down, and so far this summer in New Jersey, the lights have

stayed on. But make no mistake about it, we have an energy crisis in America. Many families face energy bills two to three times higher than they were a year ago. Millions of Americans find themselves dealing with rolling blackouts. Employers are laying off workers to absorb the rising cost of energy. Even families vacationing across America this summer may have noticed a new "energy" surcharge tacked onto their motel bills.

Let's face it, we live and work in a nation that demands more energy than we can adequately supply. We are a nation that relies on fossil fuels, and whether we think that's good or bad, it's not going to change. Oil, gas and coal fuel our nation. In fact, 52% of our nation's electricity is generated in power plants that burn coal, 20% of our nation's electricity is nuclear powered, and 18% of America's lights are turned on thanks to natural gas.

We won't go from huge gas-guzzling SUV's to small, electric vehicles overnight. Nor will we unplug our computers and televisions, and run our homes and businesses on solar energy just because someone says that's a wise thing to do. It's just not realistic. What is realistic, however, is the fact that we can be smarter and more efficient about the way we produce and consume energy.

That's why I applaud President Bush for his leadership on the issue of energy. You and I may not agree with each and every proposal he has put forth, but one thing we can all agree on is the fact that we need a comprehensive strategy to ensure a steady supply of affordable energy for America's homes, businesses and industries.

President Bush has called for such an energy policy, one that is balanced, long term and provides answers that will ensure the United States has that safe, stable and reliable national energy supply we so desperately need.

Congress worked hard to shape the President's vision. It is important to keep in mind that this problem was created as a result of eight years of neglect and "knee-jerk" reactions to various energy crises "of the moment." Thus, since this crisis worsened over many years, there is no overnight solution to our nation's energy woes. Furthermore, once our strategic plan is implemented, it will require constant monitoring. We will need to update the plan as new technology is developed and alternative energy sources are found. But having a plan already in place will make it easier to make necessary adjustments in the way our nation produces and uses energy.

The President's plan has many components. Among the provisions Congress is addressing are funding increases for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, setting stricter standards for energy use in Federal buildings, and offering tax credits for consumers, home and business owners that focus on energy conservation, reliability and production. A large part of the President's plan calls for funding increases to improve conservation efforts, reduce energy consumption and to encourage research and development of renewable energy, oil, gas, coal and nuclear energy. He also wants us to focus on the development of the most promising new sources of clean energy, including hydrogen, biomass, and alternative fueled vehicles. These are just a few

examples of the many areas in energy science, conservation and public assistance we will be addressing over the coming months.

For my part, you should know that I serve on the Appropriations Subcommittee which oversees the budget for the Department of Energy. In that role, I have and will continue to support increased funding for research, development and greater consumer use of renewable energy. Over the last 7 years the Federal government has invested some \$2.2 billion in renewable energy. I also remain a steadfast supporter of fusion energy research, much of which is conducted in New Jersey at Princeton University. Fusion energy has the potential to become an unlimited, safe, environmentally friendly, affordable energy source. I appreciate the budget support, some \$240 million this year for continued research, from the President and Secretary of Energy, Spencer Abraham.

As a nation, we want the lights to come on whenever we flip the switch. We expect our computers to run and the air conditioning to work. Fortunately for New Jerseyans, unlike our fellow Americans in California, our power still flows—the lights come on, the computer runs and the air conditioning works. This is in large part due to the fact that most of New Jersey's electric power is generated by nuclear energy—75 percent of our electricity comes to us thanks to nuclear power. Nuclear energy has come a long way. It's proven to be safe, stable and reliable. But much of our nation does not have the benefit of such an abundant, reliable source of energy and that's exactly why we need a comprehensive national energy plan. As a nation, we cannot afford any more "California" crises.

The bottom line is America must be energy self-sufficient. Currently, our nation imports over 55% of the oil we consume from foreign oil cartels. This must change. When more than half of our energy needs comes from foreign sources, particularly OPEC, that alone is a security risk. We need more American oil, more American gas, and more use of American clean-coal technology, to name just a few. This is the only way to guarantee an uninterrupted supply of energy when we need it. But this drive to produce more energy domestically does not mean that energy development and environmental priorities cannot co-exist. They must. There must be a balance between energy development and the protection of our environment. For the record, when I say balance is needed, I mean drilling in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge, or off the coasts of New Jersey or Florida are not options.

Obviously energy has enormous implications for large and small businesses, homeowners, our economy, environment, and our national security. Under the President's leadership, I am confident that we will better manage America's energy problems. It won't be easy and there will be many disagreements. No one person, or no one political party, has all the answers. That's why the debate in Congress on America's energy plan for the 21st Century is so important. And, part of our obligation is to listen to our constituents and educate all Americans about the reality of our energy situation, and what it will actually take to improve it.

Mr. Chairman, the situation is not as 'cut and dry' as some people on both sides of the issue would like to make it. We cannot simply throw caution to the wind and build pipelines all over the place, and drill for oil or gas anywhere the oil companies want. Neither can we simply oppose an energy plan because we are pure environmentalists. The reality is we are a nation of homeowners, commuters and computer users—we consume energy in practically everything we do. That's why I am working to provide the necessary balance to our energy plan that will help us better manage our energy production and consumption. There's no way to escape it—we need a strategy on energy, and that's exactly what we are working on. At the same time, we can ill-afford to give up on our historic obligation to our children to protect our nation's air, water, wildlife and open spaces.

We can, and will, do both.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I support H.R. 4 and urge my colleagues to do the same.

SECURING AMERICA'S FUTURE ENERGY ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2001

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4) to enhance energy conservation, research and development and to provide for security and diversity in the energy supply for the American people, and for other purposes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong opposition to this bill. This bill does not enhance our security: it endangers it. It does not protect our environment: it threatens it.

Increasing global warming does not enhance our security. Increasing our reliance on nuclear power plants and creating more nuclear waste does not enhance our security. Making only token changes in fuel economy standards does not enhance our security.

This bill does not enhance our security. Instead it jeopardizes wilderness, ignores consumers, and rewards the fossil fuel industry at the public expense.

This bill subsidizes the oil industry and gives billions in tax breaks to oil producers in an age of record-breaking profits.

In contrast, it does nothing for California consumers and taxpayers who have paid billions in unjust and unjustified energy costs.

Instead of promoting cost-based rates and badly needed refunds, it increases tax breaks and handouts for the oil, coal, and nuclear industries.

When Minority Leader DICK GEHARDT and other members of Congress came to my district of Oakland, California, they saw the faces of this crisis. They heard from small business owners who face potential bankruptcy. They heard from persons with disabilities for whom blackouts are nightmares and rising bills are an impossible expense. They heard from school administrators who have been forced to divert money from much needed textbooks,